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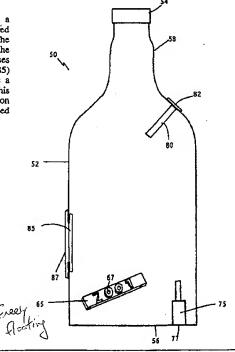
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(54) Title: CONTAINER AND METHOD FOR AGEING WHISKEY

(57) Abstract

A method for ageing spirits, particularly whiskey, includes removing a generally matured whiskey from a first wooden cask and transferring the matured whiskey to a supplementary container (50) for storage and further maturation. The supplementary container (50) includes a wood component (65, 75, 80, 85) for the continued maturation of the whiskey contained therein. The container (50) comprises a bottle having a body (53) through which a wood component (65, 75, 80, 85) is passed and fixed thereto. The wood component (65, 75, 80, 85) thus has a surface exposed to the maturing whiskey and the air surrounding the bottle. This facilitates the natural evaporation of whiskey components (65, 75, 80, 85) are shaped to Increase the surface area available for contact with the maturing whiskey.

Conbe oak



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CONTAINER AND METHOD FOR AGEING WHISKEY

The present invention relates to ageing spirits and more particularly to a method and an apparatus for facilitating the ageing of whiskey.

It is well known to use sherry casks in the production of whiskey for ageing and maturing to produce a full-bodied whiskey. It is also appreciated that the wood used for the ageing of whiskey in casks is important to the quality to the final product. European oak (Querns robar and Quercus sessilis) is considered the superior species.

The term "whiskey" used herein refers also to whiskey of Scottish origin and other varieties of malt and/or grain based spirits. It will be appreciated that the apparatus of the invention may also be used for wines, fortified wines and other spirits requiring a maturation phase.

- It is an object of the present invention to provide a method and an apparatus for facilitating the production of full-bodied flavoursome whiskies.
- Accordingly, the present invention provides a non-wooden container for storage and retail sale of a generally matured whiskey, the container including a wood component for the continued maturation of the whiskey contained therein.
- The wood components are provided to facilitate the contact of the generally mature whiskey with an area of wood to add further flavour characteristics to the whiskey.
- Preferably, the wood components include a surface exposed to the air surrounding the container so that natural

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evaporation of whiskey components may occur to simulate the evaporation phenomenon of wooden casks.

The container preferably comprises a glass or ceramic bottle or container.

In a preferred construction the container is a bottle for storage, distribution and sale of whiskey in a retail environment, the bottle comprising a body and a cap, in which a wood component is added to the bottle to provide an area of wood for contacting with the whiskey disposed therein and includes a surface contacting the air surrounding the bottle.

15 Preferably, the wood component passes through the body of the bottle and is fixed relative thereto.

Conveniently, means are provided to facilitate the expansion (or contraction) of the wood component.

In one arrangement the wood component is formed to float freely in whiskey contained in the container.

The wood component is profiled or shaped to increase the 25 surface area available for contact with the whiskey and to decrease the volume occupied thereby in a container.

Advantageously, the wood component has been used as part of a cask in the maturation of sherry and/or spirits, such as malt spirits. This arrangement facilitates the use of wood components from casks which have reached the end of their useful life.

The wood component may be aesthetically shaped, by carving for example and may carry an indication of the

WO 97/49795 PCT/IE97/00043

- 3 -

origin, character and/or maturation date thereon.

The wood component may be crafted to present an object having a low volume and high surface area such as a ship in a bottle.

The present invention further provides a method for ageing whiskey, the method including removing a generally matured whiskey from a first wooden cask and transferring the matured whiskey to a supplementary non-wooden container for storage and further maturation, the supplementary container including a wood component for the continued maturation of the whiskey contained therein.

- The method utilises a wood component which includes a surface exposed to the air surrounding the supplementary container so that natural evaporation of whiskey components may occur to simulate the evaporation phenomenon of wooden casks.
 - Preferably, the wood component is provided with a charred layer or a layer of activated carbon to increase the complexity of the matured whiskey.
- Advantageously, the wood component is profiled or shaped to increase the surface area available for contact with whiskey and to decrease the volume occupied in the container.
- Preferably, the wood component is formed of oak, for example, European oak.

The invention will now be described more particularly with reference to the accompanying drawing which shows, by way of example only, one embodiment of container according to

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WO 97/49795 PCT/TE97/00043

- 4 -

the present invention. In the drawing:

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Figure 1 is a sectional side elevation combining four different constructions of the wood component for use with the supplementary container for ageing spirits.

Wines and spirits undergo a slow maturation process which is conducted in oak barrels to achieve the highest quality and most flavoursome product. Unfortunately, the demand for oak barrels is such that alternative or accelerated processes are sought. In the method of the present invention, a generally mature spirit, having undergone the stages of maturation in a oak barrel is transferred to a supplementary container where it is allowed to continue to mature further.

The supplementary container for ageing spirits comprises a bottle 50 having a glass body 52 and a cap 54. Four constructions of wood component are shown in Figure 1 in which the wood component presents a surface to the whiskey stored in the bottle. All four constructions need necessarily not be used together in one bottle.

In the first construction, a wood component 65 such as a
25 shaped piece of toasted or charred European oak is freely
floating within the bottle of whiskey. Further maturation
of the whiskey is facilitated and the flavour is allowed
to develop in the bottle over a storage period. The wood
component 65 is optionally crafted to indicate the origin
30 of the whiskey or a minimum maturation date 67. Other
shapes may include a shamrock for Irish whiskey, a thistle
or heather for Scottish whisky, figurines of animals or
birds or a representative element from the logo or trade
mark of the producer. For example, a grouse for "Famous
35 Grouse", a bell for "Bell's" whisky, a mortarboard for

WO 97/49795 PCT/IE97/00043

- 5 -

"Teachers" or a sailing ship for "Cutty Sark". All of these brands are registered trade marks.

The second, third and fourth constructions each comprise a wood component 75,80,85 which is secured to the glass body 52 of the bottle 50. The second construction comprises a wood component 75 which is secured to the base 56 of the bottle 50, the third construction comprises a wood component 80 which is secured to the sloping area adjacent the neck 58 of the bottle 50 and the fourth construction 10 comprises a wood component 85 which is secured to the curved side wall of the bottle 50. In each construction, the wood component 75,80,85 is either adhered to the inner surface of the glass body 52 or penetrates the wall of the body 52 to present a surface 77,82,87 to the air 15 surrounding the bottle 50. The surface 77,82,87 presented to the air is flush with or protrudes marginally from the outer surface of the bottle body 52.

20 Each of the above constructions 65,75,80,85 allow generally mature whiskey to be bottled and presented for sale for a consumer.

It is considered that the invention would have particular appeal in the marketing of whiskey and other spirits which improve with maturation.

It will of course be understood that the invention is not limited to the specific details described herein, which are given by way of example only, and that various modifications and alterations are possible within the scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims.

CLAIMS:

- 1. A non-wooden container (50) for storage and retail sale of a generally matured whiskey, the container (50) including a wood component (65,75,80,85) for the continued maturation of the whiskey contained therein.
- A container as claimed in claim 1, in which the wood component includes a surface (72,82,87) exposed to the air surrounding the container (50) so that natural evaporation of whiskey components may occur to simulate the evaporation phenomenon of wooden casks.
- A container as claimed in either claims 1 or claim 2,
 in which the container is a glass or ceramic bottle (50).
 - 4. A container as claimed in claim 3, in which the container is a bottle (50) for storage, distribution and sale of whiskey in a retail environment, the bottle comprising a body (52) and a cap (54), with the wood component (65,75,80,85) being added to the bottle (50) to provide an area of wood for contacting with the whiskey disposed therein and including a surface (77,82,87) contacting the air surrounding the bottle.
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- 5. A container as claimed in claim 4, in which the wood component passes through the body of the bottle and is fixed relative thereto.
- 30 6. A container as claimed in claim 5, in which means are provided to facilitate the expansion (or contraction) of the wood component.
- 7. A container as claimed in any of the preceding claims,35 in which the wood component is formed to float freely in

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whiskey contained in the container.

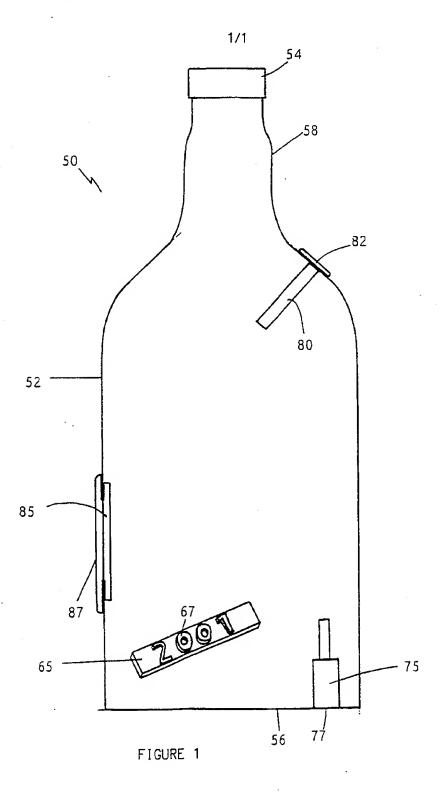
- 8. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the component is profiled and shaped to increase the surface area available for contact with the whiskey and to decrease the volume occupied thereby in a container.
- A container as claimed in any one of the preceding
 claims, in which the wood component is taken from the wood of a cask previously used in the maturation of sherry and/or spirits, such as malt spirits.
- 10. A container as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, in which the wood component is aesthetically shaped, by carving for example, and carries an indication of the origin, character and/or maturation date thereon.
- 11. A container as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, in which the wood component is crafted to present an object having a low volume and high surface area such as a ship in a bottle.
- 12. A method for ageing whiskey, the method including removing a generally matured whiskey from a first wooden cask and transferring the matured whiskey to a supplementary non-wooden container for storage and retail sale, the supplementary container including a wood component for the continued maturation of the whiskey contained therein.
 - 13. A method for ageing whiskey as claimed in claim 12, in which the wood component includes a surface exposed to the air surrounding the supplementary container so that natural evaporation of whiskey components may occur to

WO 97/49795 PCT/IE97/00043

- 8 -

simulate the evaporation phenomenon of wooden casks.

- 14. A method for ageing whiskey as claimed in either claim 12 or claim 13, in which the wood component is provided with a charred layer or a layer of activated carbon to increase the complexity of the matured whiskey.
- 15. A method ageing whiskey as claimed in any one of of claims 12 to 14, in which the wood component is profiled or shaped to increase the surface area available for contact with whiskey and to decrease the volume occupied in the container.
- 16. A method of ageing whiskey as claimed in any one of claims 12 to 15, in which the wood component is formed of oak, for example, European oak.



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Intern al Application No PCT/IE 97/00043

	4 (1) 400(6)	CATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
B. FELLOS SEARCHED	IPC 6	C12H1/22 C12G3/07		
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